Ahlut-Tawhid Publications

منهجٌ موجزٌ في طلبِ العلمِ

A Succinct Methodology in Seeking Knowledge

أهل التوحيد
Publications

Shaykh Nasir al-Fahd

منهج موجز في طلب العلم

A Succinct Methodology in Seeking Knowledge

أهل التوحيد
Publications

Shaykh Nasir al-Fahd

أهل التوحيد

Publications

Publisher's Note

With the name of Allah, the owner and bestower of mercy, I begin. All praise belongs to Allah, the Mighty and Strong; and may the *salah* and *salam* [of Allah] be upon the one sent with the sword as a mercy to creation. As for what follows…

We are honored to present, and we thank Allah tremendously for His bounties and favors, an English translation of a small treatise on the methodology in seeking sacred knowledge written by the oppressed and imprisoned scholar, Shaykh Abu Mus'ab Nasir ibn Hamad al-Fahd (may Allah open a way out for him and all our imprisoned *muwahhidin* in the Arabian peninsula and elsewhere). In reality, he needs no introduction. He is known to foe and friend alike. His writings are widespread and his words are listened to. He is from a rare breed of *'ulama* who were willing to sacrifice their lives in speaking the truth. Once you come to know, *akhi fillah*, who the true scholars of this *ummah* are, who are the inheritors of the prophets, you come to know at precisely the exact same time who the betrayers of this *ummah* are from its scholars - the inheritors of Bal'am ibn Barurah and the lying Jewish rabbis.

Herein the *shaykh* briefly outlines a path for one whom Allah opened his chest for in seeking *shar'i* knowledge. And on the authority of Mu'awiyah (*radiyallahu 'anhu*) that he heard the Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) say, "Whoever Allah wants good for He grants him understanding of the *din*." So rejoice if Allah has opened your heart to

seeking knowledge of this *din*. Thank Allah for that blessing again and again, and do not be ungrateful to Allah for that gift by turning away from it by not acting upon the knowledge Allah bestows upon you. Not acting upon that knowledge comes in many different forms; it could be by showing arrogance, as the knowledge of being humble is with you, or it could be by matters greater than that which lead to *kufr*, as you see with the scholars of the *tawaghit*, and we seek refuge in Allah.

He (*'azza wa jall*) said, "And recite to them the story of him to whom We gave Our *ayat*, but he threw them away, so *Shaytan* followed him up, and he became of those who went astray. And had We willed, We would surely, have elevated him therewith, but he clung to the earth and followed his own vain desire. Thus his parable is the parable of a dog: if you drive him away, he lolls his tongue out, or if you leave him alone, he lolls his tongue out. Such is the parable of the people who reject Our *ayat*. So relate the stories, perhaps they may reflect."[1] Reflect and ponder, *akhil-karim*, then reflect and contemplate again the *ayat* of Allah. May Allah protect you.

Since this was written, obviously, in Arabic it is geared and more suited for those who already can read and understand Arabic. Therefore, the English reader will find that many of the works he cites and recommends one to read are not translated into English. This should encourage us to strive to understand the Arabic language, as that is where the knowledge is found and you gain a first hand glance of what the scholars of the *tawaghit*, not only in the East but also in the West, have been hiding and distorting.

[1] Surah al-A'raf: 175-176.

Footnotes from us have been marked by "Publisher's note" while the rest are the author's. And not all of the footnotes from the Arabic have been added. We ask Allah that He accepts this from us and guides us to the straight path in knowledge and action.

Finally, we end by saying that all praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of creation.

Safar 1440

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ALL PRAISE BELONGS to Allah. And may the *salah* and *salam* [of Allah] be upon the Messenger of Allah. As for what follows…

Some virtuous brothers thought well of me - assuming the tumor was meat[2] - so they sought from me that I outline a methodology for them in seeking knowledge. I had already compiled a rough draft of a book on this subject, except that I can not complete it at the moment due to circumstances that are not hidden. Therefore, I saw that I should write a summary of what was in it, according to what fits on this paper. I ask Allah to make it beneficial.

First: *al-Ikhlas* (Sincerity)

It is necessary for the student of knowledge to purify his intentions; and this command is well-known. However, the path is long, the highway robbers are spread out, and the calamities that affect the intention are many and hidden. Thus it is necessary for the student of knowledge to renew his intention constantly, as it is a thing which changes many times.

[2] Publisher's note: When a lamb used to have a tumor on its body, some might assume that it is getting fatter and thus will have more meat. So the Arabs used to say this phrase. It might mean "overestimating," and what's similar to that, in English.

Second: *Tazkiyah an-Nafs* (the Purification of the Soul)

This is achieved through acts of obedience, adhering to *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness), renewal of *tawbah* (repentance), and avoiding disobedience, for they are amongst the greatest obstacles in the pursuit of knowledge. The student of knowledge is denied [knowledge] and forgets what he memorizes and understanding becomes difficult, all due to disobedience.

Third: Seeking Help from Allah (*ta'ala*)

Requesting Him, calling upon Him, being humble before Him, breaking down between His hands, seeking guidance and correctness from Him, attaching [oneself] to "*la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*" (there is no strength nor power except with Allah) and the multitude of supplications narrated on this subject, like:

رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

"*Rabbi zidni 'ilma*" (My Lord, increase me in knowledge)

سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

"*Subhanaka la 'ilma lana illa ma 'allamtana, innaka anta al- 'Alim al-Hakim*" (Glorified are You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the All-Wise)

اللّٰهمَّ عَلِّمْني ما ينفعُني، وانفعْني بما علَّمتَني

"*Allahumma 'allimni ma yanfa'uni wanfa'ni bima 'allamtani*" (O Allah, teach me what benefits, and benefit me with what you teach me)

اللّٰهمَّ فقِّهْني في الدين وعَلِّمْني التأويل

"*Allahumma faqqihni fid-Din wa 'allimnit-tawil*" (Oh Allah, grant me understanding of the Din, and teach me its interpretation)

اللّٰهمَّ يا معلِّم آدمَ وإبراهيمَ عَلِّمْني ويا مفهِّم سُليمانَ فَهِّمْني

"*Allahumma ya Muʿallima Adama wa Ibrahima ʿallimni, wa ya Mufahhima Sulaymana fahhimni*" (Oh Allah, the One who taught Adam and Ibrahim, teach me, and oh One who gave understanding to Sulayman, grant me understanding)

Fourth: *al-'Amal* (Action)

It is upon the student to act upon his knowledge, as this is the objective of knowledge; it is not for adorning oneself with it in front of the people. Therefore, it is incumbent upon him to strive in acts of obedience and to increase in the *nawafil* (voluntary acts) from *qiyam* (night *salah*), *siyam* (fasting), *sadaqah* (charity), recitation, *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), and others. And I would like to point out two issues here:

1. Occupying oneself to only reading books, memorizing *mutun* (short texts), gathering and teaching knowledge, instills hardness in the heart; thus making worship heavy on the student. Due to that, he should take off during his study periods for voluntary worship. He should study the lives of the righteous, because this softens the heart and encourages one to action, with the permission of Allah.

2. Here there is a misconception, which some lazy students of knowledge bring, those whom knowledge is easy but worship is heavy. It is: "seeking knowledge is better than voluntary acts of worship." This misconception should not deceive anyone, as the two matters do not clash with each other in principle

that one has to put one over the other. You should take a look at the great scholars of the *ummah* from the *Sahabah*, the *Tabi'in*, and those after them, and see they were famous for their worship. Knowledge is only given precedence over worship if there is a clash between the two and no way to reconcile and join both matters together; and this does not appear except in rare specific cases.

Fifth: Knowledge Cannot be Attained with Relaxation of the Body

The student must work hard, be diligent, and strive, particularly at the start of seeking [knowledge]. It is said: **excellence consists of one tenth intelligence and nine tenths of strenuous effort**. And whoever complains about a weakness in being able to memorize or understand, can make amends by having a strong will, abandoning laziness, and doubling the efforts. So for whoever's aspirations are strong, intentions are corrected, and strives rightfully in his affairs will reach the goal, if Allah wills.

Sixth: Knowledge is Vast to Encompass it All, So Take from Every Science what is Best

The student [of knowledge] should not busy himself - especially in the beginning - with the structures of the path, from the strangest of issues and oddities of knowledge for which there is no value except for the passing of time and overcoming peers. Rather, he should be active in mastering the principles of the sciences and comprehending the most important matters.

Seventh: From the Blessing of Knowledge is Equity and Leaving Partisanship

Thus the student [of knowledge] should seek the truth with its proof from the Book and the Sunnah without being fanatical towards a *madhhab*, scholar, or *shaykh*, for everyone's statement can be accepted or left except for the Prophet's (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

Eighth: Whoever Neglects the Principles is Prevented from the Goal

The principles are of two types:

1. The foundation of all the sciences, and it is: ***at-tawhid***; the student [of knowledge] would never be excused for being ignorant of it.

2. The *usul* of the sciences which the student [of knowledge] studies - here the general meaning of *asl* is meant, not the specific one. So the *usul* of every field is its most important chapters, categories, terminologies, and its issues.

Ninth: There is No Knowledge Except for What Stays in the Chest

Therefore, it is a must for the student to memorize the *mutun*, the evidences, the sayings [of the scholars], and the core matters. The levels of memorization are four:

1. Memorizing the words of the *mutun*; and this is the foundation. The student should not leave this unless it becomes difficult for him.

2. Memorizing the *mutun* by their meanings; so the student memorizes the *matn* in full, either by its wording or by its meaning and doesn't stick to the author's words because it is not an issue of worship.

3. Choosing what to memorize; thus if the *matn* is very long and the student finds it difficult to memorize, then he should abridge it to the point that it is no longer difficult for him. He does so by choosing the most important sections and matters, if it is a written text, or the important lines, if it is a poem, and he should seek assistance from those who are experienced from the people of knowledge, and then after that he should memorize what he has chosen.

4. Choosing what to preserve either by its wordings or by its meaning.

Tenth: Knowledge is Hunting and Writing is Capturing

The student should not rely upon his memory at all times, because memorization betrays and what is memorized can escape, but what is written is preserved. So he should seek to compile and summarise the benefits and gather his studies.

Eleventh: Whoever Seeks Knowledge in a Lump Sum, It Will Leave Him in a Lump Sum

Thus it is the responsibility of the student to take matters step by step when it comes to knowledge and learn it bit by bit, and that he does not go to one matter to another until he has perfected it, for congestion of the sciences in the mind often leads to the point where one loses knowledge.

The well-known stages of seeking knowledge are three:

1. For the beginners: it is to gain an understanding of the general notion of things; it is referred to as "the stage of the *mutun*." In it, the student becomes acquainted with the terminologies of the sciences, its matters, and its structure, and it is must for the student to put his effort at this stage in understanding the wordings and terminologies, he should not busy his mind with precisely determining and examining the matters.

2. For the middle stage: it is for examining and comprehension; it is referred to as "the stage of the explanations of the *mutun*." In it, the student looks into the various matters, their proofs, and distinguishes what is most correct from it.

3. For those who are firmly established: it is for expanding and *ijtihad*; it is referred to as "the state of great and detailed works." In it, the student expands his knowledge in the branches of knowledge, and he looks at the finer matters and looks into the disagreements, etc.

As for the specific books for each stage, then this differs according to time, place, *madhhab*, and *shaykh*. And what I am going to mention here does not have to necessarily imply to everyone.

<u>TAWHID</u>

1. ***Tawhid al-'Ibadah***: The student should begin with the shorter works of Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab, such as:

Al-Usul ath-Thalathah, *Al-Qawa'id al-Arba'*, and [*Kitab*] *at-Tawhid*, then move on to its explanations and elucidations. After that, the longer works from the books of ibn Taymiyyah and the leadings scholars of the *da'wah*, such as: *Ad-Durar as-Saniyyah* and others.

2. ***Tawhid al-Asma was-Sifat***: You should start with the shorter works of Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah, such as: *Al-Wasitiyyah* and *Al-Hamawiyyah*, then *At- Tadmuriyyah* and the explanations of *Al-Wasitiyyah*. Then one proceeds with the longer works herein, e.g., the categories of creed from *Majmu' al-Fatawa*, *Dar* [*at-Ta'arub al-'Aql wan-Naql*], *As-Sawa'iq al-Mursalah*, and others.

QURAN

1. ***Tafsir***: it is an advanced knowledge, and the books are exhaustive, even the short summary versions of them. Here there is no *mutun*. Therefore, it is best for the student [of knowledge] to acquire portions of the other knowledges before he embarks on this journey. There are many books of *tafsir*, and the majority of them are not free from *bida'*. The foremost books of *tafsir* are the ones by: at-Tabari, al-Baghawi, ibn Kathir, ibn as-Sa'di, and *Ad-Durr al-Manthur* by as-Suyuti.

2. ***Usul at-Tafsir***: among the superlative *mutun* here is *Muqaddimah at-Tafsir* by Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah. There are multiple elaborations and notes upon it which have been printed. I abridged it, along with adding other matters from the words of ibn Taymiyyah, and this can be found on the net.

3. ***'Ulum al-Quran***: among the most adequate of what has been written here is *Al-Itqan* by as-Suyuti, although there is some *bida'* in it.

HADITH

Its mutun are numerous; the most well-known being: *'Umdah al-Ahkam* by al-Maqdisi, *Bulugh al-Maram* by ibn Hajr, *Al-Muharrar* by ibn 'Abdil-Hadi, and *Al-Muntaqa* by al-Majd ibn Taymiyyah. For the student, it behooves him to begin with *'Umdah* [*al-Ahkam*] due to its brevity, then to continue to *Bulugh* [*al-Maram*] or *Al-Muharrar*, since they are about equal. Afterwards, one should move on to the explanations of these books, then come to the longer works, such as: *Fath al-Bari*, *Sharh Muslim*, *Nayl al-Awtar*, and others.

MUSTALAH AL-HADITH

Among the famous *mutun* herein are *Al-Bayquniyyah*, *Nukhbah al-Fikr* by ibn Hajr, *Al-Muqidhah* by adh-Dhahabi, then their explanations, along with the elaborations of *Muqaddimah ibn as-Salah*. After this comes the study of the books of the origins of *ahadith*, the hidden defects, and the books of the histories of the narrators, etc.

There are two matters I would like to point out:

Firstly, most of the science of *hadith* books in existence today are upon the methodology of the later *hadith* scholars, in contradiction to the *manhaj* of the early scholars.

Secondly, the mere abstract theoretical study of this science carries very little benefit. Thus it is incumbent upon the student [of

knowledge], if he wants the benefits, to carry out case studies and to look at the origins of the *hadith* himself, and to go directly to the books of the origins, the men of the chain, and the hidden defects.

USUL AL-FIQH

Here, the well known mutun are *Al-Waraqat* by al-Juwayni, *Mukhtasar ibn al-Hajib*, and *Al-Minhaj* by al-Baydawi, then their explanations, then the longer works such as *Al-Mustasfa*, *Al-Ihkam*, *Al-Bahr al-Muhit*, etc.

There are two matters that I would like to make mention here:

Firstly, most of the books of *usul* are not free from the *bida'* of the *mutakallimun* (people of rhetoric). The exceptions, however, include *Rawdah an-Nadir* by ibn Qudamah, and the notes on it from ash-Shanqiti were published under the title *Mudhkirah fi Usul al-Fiqh*. [Also you have] *Sharh al-Kawkab al-Munir* by ibn an-Najjar al-Futuhi. And I compiled *Usul Fiqh Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah*, which can be found online.

Secondly, books on *usul* are difficult to understand due to the multiples of technical terms and jargon. Therefore, it is best for the beginner to start by reading the works of contemporary scholars in this science, because they are easier to comprehend and use easier language. These include: *Usul al-Fiqh* by Khallaf, al-Khudari, Zaydan, and others. When one has finished with them, then he moves on to the works of the early scholars.

FIQH

The *mutun* vary according to the different schools of thought, *Al-Kanz* for the Hanafiyyah, *Mukhtasar al-Khalil* for the Malikiyyah, *Al-Minhaj* for the Shafi'iyyah, and *Zad al-Mustaqni'* for the Hanabilah. Then one moves on to their explanations, then to the longer works like *Al-Mughni*, *al-Majmu'*, etc. And for the one who does not adhere to any specific school of thought, then for him is *Ad-Durar al-Bahiyyah* by ash-Shawkani and its explanation *Ar-Rawdah an-Nadiyyah* by Siddiq al-Qanuji.

There are two matters that I would like to make mention here:

Firstly, many who ascribe to following *hadith* in our times criticize following a school of thought and those books, but this needs to be reviewed; what is blameworthy is blind fanaticism. There is no problem learning and knowing the schools of thought by these books. And here there is a detailed elaboration which is not suitable to go through now.

Secondly, I recommend the student [of knowledge], after coming to know *fiqh* and its *usul*, to read the books of *al-Fuqaha al-Ahrar* (lit. the free scholars of fiqh), those who do not strictly adhere to a particular school of thought: ibn Hazm, ibn Taymiyyah, ibnul-Qayyim, and ash-Shawkani.[3] They help the student tremendously and allow them to develop the capacity for *ijtihad*, hold the revealed texts in high esteem, and consider the statements of men based upon them.

---

[3] While being aware that ibn Hazm is from the *Dhahiriyyah* and ash-Shawkani from the *Dhahiryyah* people of *hadith*; those who affirm what is included [in the texts] and in its meaning, but reject deductive analogy of the cause (*qiyas al-'ilal*). Due to that many odd opinions came from them which opposed *ijma'*. Thus it is befitting for the student to begin reading *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in* by ibnul-Qayyim before embarking to read their works as it is from the best of what has been written on *usul* and dealing with the texts, avoiding both the rigidness of the people of *qiyas* and the extremism of the *Dhahiriyyah*.

***AN-NAHW* (Grammar)**

The student [of knowledge] begins with *Al-Ajrumiyyah*, continuing on to its explanation *At-Tuhfah as-Saniyyah*, alongside the summarized books of ibn Hisham, such as *Sharh Shudhur adh-Dhahab* and *Sharh Qatr an-Nada*, and then onto the more detailed works, such as *Mughni al-Labib* and the explanations upon *Al-Alfiyyah*, etc.

There are two matters that I would like to make mention here:

Firstly, mastering grammar in theory does mean being safe from grammatical mistakes due to one's tainted upbringing, as it is known that even some of the leading scholars of grammar fell into grammatical errors. And one of the best ways to improve the tongue (i.e., your speech) is for the student [of knowledge] to read a number of books with the *tashkil* (with the *harakat*), while reading the *harakat* (the vowel markings) out loud. Each time he increases reading like this, his tongue will become more fluent, and with repetition of this, the student [of knowledge] develops a natural ability and knowledge of the Arabic language, if Allah (*ta'ala*) wills it to be so.

Secondly, the perfection of grammar theoretically and practically means being safe from grammatical errors and knowing the *i'rab* (how words decline); it does not mean having eloquent speech, a beautiful portrayal, and impressive style. That is found in the books of *adab*, not grammar. So if the student [of knowledge] wants to improve his style, he should look into the books of Arabic poetry, the works on eloquence, and the leaders of beautiful speech. He should attempt to memorize as much as he can of poems and sayings of *adab*; and he

should refer to the books on *al-insha*[4] like *Al-Mathal as-Sa'ir* by ibnul-Athir, etc.

Twelfth: Combining Between the Two Types of *Fiqh*

After the student [of knowledge] gains an understanding of the *shar'*, he should gain an understanding of the *waqi'* (on the ground realities), in order to tie it to the *shar'* and to know its ruling. So he observes the contemporary schools of thoughts with regards to beliefs and theories, and learns new *fiqh* issues, and goes back to the books containing new encyclopedias and follows the events; but he needs to be balanced here, so that it does not become a burden upon him.

Thirteen: The One who Teaches Early, Loses Much Knowledge

The student [of knowledge] should strive to be firm in knowledge before he sets himself up for teaching. And he should continue to learn, even after he begins to teach, as Imam Ahmad said, "[Seeking knowledge is] from the cradle to the grave."

Fourteenth: The *Adab* of Seeking [Knowledge]

It is upon the student [of knowledge] to adorn himself with manners and etiquettes of seeking [knowledge] in himself and with his teachers, colleagues, students, and others. Many scholars of the past and present have written numerous works on this issue, so it is best to refer to them.

---

[4] Publisher's note: It is the science through which we learn how to develop and arrange feelings, emotions, ideas, and descriptions into clear Arabic expressions. Also referred to as the art of composition.

And Lastly

These are some writings and essays that I advise the seeker of knowledge to read, to look into repeatedly, and to refer back to constantly:

1. All of the writings of Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah and his student ibnul-Qayyim (*rahimahumallah*), as their works are based upon the understanding of the Book and Sunnah, and they are the mainstay of the *salafi* methodology.[5]

2. All of the writings of al-Hafidh adh-Dhahabi (*rahimahullah*), as he is, indeed, a investigative researcher.

3. All of the writings of al-Hafith ibn Rajab (*rahimahullah*), in particular: *Fath al-Bari*, *Sharh al-'Ilal*, *Jami' al- 'Ulum*, and *Al-Qawa'id*, due to the benefits found in them that can not be found elsewhere.

4. *Fath al-Bari* by al-Hafidh ibn Hajr, as it is not just an elaboration of [*Sahih*] *al-Bukhari*, rather, it is an explanation of all the books of *sihah* (pl. of *sahih*), *sunan*, and *masanid* (pl. of *musnad*); and it is the mainstay for the commentators of *hadith* after him.

---

[5] I do not love anyone more, after the people of the blessed generations, than I do five of the leading scholars. And I, by Allah, constantly make *du'a* for them in my *sujud*. They are: Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah, his student ibnul-Qayyim, Imam Muhammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab, his student 'Abdul- 'Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'ud, and our *shaykh* Hamud ash-Shu'aybi. May Allah have mercy on them all.

5. All of the writings of the leadings scholars of the *Da'wah an-Najdiyyah* (*rahimahumullah*), and in particular: *Ad-Durar as-Saniyyah*, for it is as its name suggests.[6]

6. All of the writings of Shaykh 'Abdur-Rahman al-Mu'allimi (*rahimahullah*), the Dhahabi of our times, in particular: *At-Tankil* and *Al-Anwar al-Kashifah*.

7. The notes written by Shaykh 'Abdur-Rahman ibn Qasim upon *Ar-Rawd al-Murbi'*, as it is from the most excellent of what has been written in *fiqh*, and there are points, gems, and benefits in it that can not be found elsewhere.

8. All of the writings of Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (*rahimahullah*), for he is amongst the excellent contemporaries in authorship, articulating various issues, and the best of them in benefits.

9. In regard to what the contemporaries have written in the science of *hadith*, the works of Shaykh Tariq ibn 'Awdillah are from the foremost of what has been written; his books are precious, and his elucidation of *Nukhbah al-Fikr* is from the best of its explanations.

This [is the methodology] for one to undertake to help facilitate his goal.

May the *salah* of Allah be upon our prophet Muhammad, his household, and his companions altogether.

Nasir ibn Hamad al-Fahd

---

[6] Publisher's note: *Ad-Durar as-Saniyyah* can be translated as "the splendid pearls".

أهل التوحيد

Publications